

Remarks

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and further examination are respectfully requested.

The specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised so as to make a number of editorial revisions thereto. No new matter has been added by these revisions. Enclosed therewith are a substitute specification and abstract including the revisions.

Further, claims 1-4 have been amended so as to make a number of editorial revisions thereto. These revisions have been made so as to place the claims in better U.S. form. None of these amendments have been made to narrow the scope of protection of the claims, or to address issues related to patentability, and therefore, these revisions should not be construed as limiting the scope of equivalence offered by the Doctrine of Equivalence.

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Okabe (US 6,459,285). Claims 2 and 3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Okabe in view of Zohni (US 6,540,467). Claim 4 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okabe in view of Zohni and further in view of Tanaka (US 5,777,485).

The above-mentioned rejections are respectfully traversed and submitted to be inapplicable to the claims for the following reasons.

Claim 1 is patentable over Okabe, since claim 1 recites a wafer handling checker including, in part, voltage application means for applying a voltage between each electrode of a cassette and a conductive suction part of a vacuum pincette. Okabe fails to disclose or suggest the voltage application means as recited in claim 1.

Okabe discloses a burn-in apparatus including an isothermal chamber 11, wafer holders 12, a slot array 13, a controller 14, and bridge lines 15. The wafer holders 12 are adapted to hold semiconductor wafers 16 having semiconductor devices formed thereon. Each of the wafer holders 12 includes a stage board 51, a chuck 52, a vacuum outlet 53, and electrode chips 55. The chuck 52 and the vacuum outlet 53 are adapted so as to keep the semiconductor wafer 16 secured to the stage board 51 during screening. The controller 14 generates a voltage source and a control signal for screening the semiconductor devices on the wafers 16 and supplies them to the semiconductor devices on the wafers 16 via the bridge lines 15 and the electrode chips 55. (See column 4, lines 27-62; column 6, lines 5-15; and Figures 1 and 3C).

The rejection indicates that the bridge lines 15 correspond to the claimed voltage application means, and the vacuum outlets 53 correspond to the claimed vacuum pincette. However, as discussed above, the vacuum outlets 53 are used to suction the semiconductor wafers 16 to the stage board 51 and are not electrically connected to the bridge lines 15, which supply the source voltage and the control signal from the controller 14 to the semiconductor devices on the semiconductor wafers 16 via the electrode chips 55. Therefore, while the bridge lines 15 do supply a voltage to the semiconductor devices on the semiconductor wafers 16 via the electrode chips 55, the bridge lines 15 clearly do not apply a voltage between each of the electrode chips 55 and the vacuum outlets 53. As a result, claim 1 is patentable over Okabe.

As for (1) Zohni and (2) Tanka, these references are relied upon as disclosing (1) display means and decision means, and (2) output means for generating sound, respectively. However, it is apparent that neither of these references discloses or suggests the voltage application means as recited in claim 1.

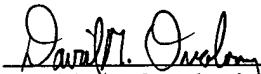
Because of the above-mentioned distinctions, it is believed clear that claims 1-4 are allowable over the references relied upon in the rejections. Furthermore, it is submitted that the distinctions are such that a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention would not have been motivated to make any combination of the references of record in such a manner as to result in, or otherwise render obvious, the present invention as recited in claims 1-4. Therefore, it is submitted that claims 1-4 are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that there are issues remaining which must be resolved before allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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